

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listing, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claims 1 – 64. (Canceled)

65. (new) An absorbent structure having an upper surface, the absorbent structure comprising:

- a) a water-swellaable, water-insoluble polymer having acidic functional groups, wherein the water-swellaable, water-insoluble polymer has at least about 50 molar percent of the acidic functional groups in free acid form; and
- b) a polymeric basic material that is not water-swellaable and water-insoluble;

wherein the absorbent structure exhibits a Wicking Capacity value that is at least about 5 grams per gram of absorbent structure and exhibits a pH on the upper surface that remains within the range of about 3 to about 8.

66. (new) The absorbent structure of claim 65 wherein the polymeric basic material comprises polyamine, polyimine, polyamide, chitin, chitosan, polyquaternary ammonium, polyasparagine, polyglutamine, polylysine, polyarginine, and mixtures thereof.

67. (new) The absorbent structure of claim 65 wherein the acidic water-swellaable, water-insoluble polymer has a pKa between about 2 and about 10.

68. (new) The absorbent structure of claim 65 wherein the acidic water-swellaable, water-insoluble polymer has at least about 70 molar percent of the acidic functional groups in free acid form.

69. (new) An absorbent structure having an upper surface, the absorbent structure comprising:
- a) a water-swellaable, water-insoluble polymer having acidic functional groups, wherein the water-swellaable, water-insoluble polymer has at least about 50 molar percent of the acidic functional groups in free acid form; and
  - b) a non-polymeric basic material;

wherein the absorbent structure exhibits a Wicking Capacity value that is at least about 5 grams per gram of absorbent structure and exhibits a pH on the upper surface that remains within the range of about 3 to about 8.

70. (new) The absorbent structure of claim 69 wherein the non-polymeric basic material comprises an organic salt, an aliphatic amine, an aromatic amine, an aliphatic imine, an aromatic imine, an aliphatic amide, an aromatic amide, a metallic oxide, a hydroxide, an inorganic salt, and mixtures thereof.

71. (new) The absorbent structure of claim 69 wherein the basic material is sodium citrate.

72. (new) The absorbent structure of claim 69 wherein the basic material is sodium carbonate, sodium bicarbonate, or calcium carbonate.

73. (new) The absorbent structure of claim 69 wherein the acidic water-swellaable, water-insoluble polymer has a pKa between about 2 and about 10.

74. (new) The absorbent structure of claim 69 wherein the acidic water-swellaable, water-insoluble polymer has at least about 70 molar percent of the acidic functional groups in free acid form.

75. (new) The absorbent structure of claim 65 or 69 wherein the acidic water-swellaable, water-insoluble polymer is prepared from a base comprising polyacrylamide, polyvinyl alcohol, ethylene maleic anhydride copolymer, polyvinylether, polyacrylic acid, polyvinylpyrrolidone, polyvinylmorpholine, carboxymethyl cellulose, carboxymethyl starch, hydroxypropyl cellulose, algin, alginate, carrageenan, acrylic grafted starch, acrylic grafted cellulose, polyaspartic acid, polyglutamic acid, and copolymers thereof.

76. (new) The absorbent structure of claim 65 or 69 wherein the acidic water-swellaable, water-insoluble polymer comprises carboxyl groups, sulfonic groups, sulphate groups, sulfite groups, phosphate groups, and combinations thereof.

77. (new) The absorbent structure of Claim 75 wherein the acidic water-swellaable, water-insoluble polymer and the basic material are present in the absorbent structure in a molar ratio from about 10:1 to about 1:10.

78. (new) The absorbent structure of Claim 75 wherein the absorbent structure exhibits a Wicking Capacity value that is at least about 10 grams per gram of absorbent structure.

79. (new) The absorbent structure of Claim 75 wherein the absorbent structure exhibits a pH on the upper surface that remains within the range of about 4 to about 7.

80. (new) A disposable absorbent product comprising the absorbent structure of claim 75.

81. (new) An absorbent structure having an upper surface, the absorbent structure comprising:  
a) a water-swellaable, water-insoluble polymer having basic functional groups, wherein the water-swellaable, water-insoluble polymer has at least about 50 molar percent of the basic functional groups in free base form; and  
b) a polymeric acidic material that is not water-swellaable and water-insoluble;  
wherein the absorbent structure exhibits a Wicking Capacity value that is at least about 5 grams per gram of absorbent structure and exhibits a pH on the upper surface that remains within the range of about 3 to about 8.

82. (new) The absorbent structure of claim 81 wherein the polymeric, acidic material comprises polyacrylic acid, polymaleic acid, carboxymethyl cellulose, alginic acid, polyaspartic acid, polyglutamic acid, and mixtures thereof.

83. (new) The absorbent structure of claim 81 wherein the basic water-swellaable, water-insoluble polymer has a pKa between about 4 and about 12.

84. (new) The absorbent structure of claim 81 wherein the basic water-swellaable, water-insoluble polymer has at least about 70 molar percent of the basic functional groups in free base form.

85. (new) An absorbent structure having an upper surface, the absorbent structure comprising:

- a) a water-swellaable, water-insoluble polymer having basic functional groups, wherein the water-swellaable, water-insoluble polymer has at least about 50 molar percent of the basic functional groups in free base form; and
- b) a non-polymeric acidic material;

wherein the absorbent structure exhibits a Wicking Capacity value that is at least about 5 grams per gram of absorbent structure and exhibits a pH on the upper surface that remains within the range of about 3 to about 8.

86. (new) The absorbent structure of claim 85 wherein the non-polymeric acidic material comprises an aliphatic acid, an aromatic acid, citric acid, glutamic acid, aspartic acid, an inorganic acid, an aluminum oxide, a salt, iron chloride, calcium chloride, zinc chloride, and mixtures thereof.

87. (new) The absorbent structure of claim 85 wherein the basic water-swellaable, water-insoluble polymer has a pKa between about 4 and about 12.

88. (new) The absorbent structure of claim 85 wherein the basic water-swellaable, water-insoluble polymer has at least about 70 molar percent of the basic functional groups in free base form.

89. (new) The absorbent structure of claim 85 wherein the basic water-swellaable, water-insoluble polymer is prepared from a base polymer comprising polyamine, polyethyleneimine, polyacrylamide, polydiallyl dimethyl ammonium hydroxide, polyquaternary ammonium, chitin, chitosan, polyasparagine, polyglutamine, polylysine, polyarginine, and copolymers thereof.

90. (new) The absorbent structure of claim 85 wherein the basic water-swellaable, water-insoluble polymer and the acidic material are present in the absorbent structure in a molar ratio from about 10:1 to about 1:10.

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91. (new) The absorbent structure of claim 85 wherein the absorbent structure exhibits a Wicking Capacity value that is at least about 10 grams per gram of absorbent structure.

92. (new) The absorbent structure of claim 85 wherein the absorbent structure exhibits a pH on the upper surface that remains within the range of about 4 to about 7.

93. (new) A disposable absorbent product comprising the absorbent structure of claim 85.